



State of California

## State Authorized Risk Assessment Tool for Sex Offenders Review Committee

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TO: Assembly Rules Committee

FROM: SARATSO Review Committee

RE: Report of the SARATSO Committee

DATE: January 15, 2011

In June 2010, the Speaker of the Assembly, John Pérez, awarded \$250,000 to the SARATSO (State Authorized Risk Assessment Tool for Sex Offenders) Review Committee ("the SARATSO Committee") for use in adopting and implementing the use of sex offender risk assessment tools in California. On June 2, 2010, an Interagency Agreement was signed by the Assembly Rules Committee and the SARATSO Committee regarding use of the funds. The SARATSO Committee immediately contacted the Controller's office to establish a special deposit fund for the money, and was referred to the Department of Finance.

On January 7, 2010, the Department of Finance notified the SARATSO Committee in writing that the special deposit fund had been established, but denied a request to issue a checkbook to the SARATSO Committee to disburse the funds as needed. Instead, Finance is requiring the SARATSO Committee to submit any invoices for payment from the special deposit fund through the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's accounting office. The SARATSO Committee is concerned that this will significantly delay disbursement of the funds for approved risk assessment projects. The Committee, although under the "umbrella" of CDCR, is not part of the Department.

The SARATSO Committee heard presentations on dynamic risk assessment tools at its September, November and December meetings in 2010. The authors of three dynamic risk assessment tools presented each to the SARATSO Committee: Dr. Stephen Wong presented the Violence Risk Scale-Sex Offender Version (VRS-SO), Dr. Karl Hanson presented the Stable-2007, and Dr. David Thornton presented the Structured Risk Assessment (SRA). Dr. Amy Phenix participated in the hearings on these tools as the expert to the SARATSO Committee. The SARATSO Committee will have the ability to reimburse Dr. Phenix for her time in consulting with the SARATSO Committee and in attending SARATSO Committee meetings (usually by teleconference), once funds become available, thanks to the grant. Dr. Phenix has been consulting with the SARATSO Committee on an unpaid basis for the last two years.

On January 13, 2011, the SARATSO Committee met and reviewed the three possible dynamic tools. Dr. Phenix will provide the coding rules and other materials on the SRA to the SARATSO Committee before the February SARATSO Committee meeting. A decision selecting the dynamic tool will be made at the February 2011 meeting. The dynamic tool must, by statute, be administered by a sex offender treatment provider. All registered sex offenders are mandated to be in treatment programs beginning July 1, 2012. The SARATSO Committee will begin offering training on the chosen dynamic risk assessment tool at least three months before

that date. Funds from the grant will be used to fund trainings on use of the dynamic risk tool.

The SARATSO Committee may also sponsor a training for parole officers on the Risk, Needs, Responsivity model, to educate Parole about dynamic risk assessment and managing sex offender caseloads.

At the January 13, 2010 SARATSO meeting, the SARATSO Committee discussed sponsoring a study in 2011 of inter-rater reliability in scoring the Static-99R risk assessment tool. The SARATSO Committee believes on-going assessment of whether scorers (probation and parole officers) are consistently and accurately scoring the tool is crucial. No funding was previously available for this study, which can now be funded by the grant.

State law mandates that persons who score the state authorized risk assessment tools be trained every two years. The next training on the juvenile risk assessment tool, the JSORRAT-II, will be scheduled in 2011. If necessary, the SARATSO Committee may use some of the grant funds to ensure that this training takes place as required.

The SARATSO Committee will schedule presentations on violence risk scales, to be made at regular meetings of the Committee in 2011, and will select a violence risk assessment tool by the end of 2011. Trainings for certified treatment providers on the chosen violence risk assessment tool will be funded from the grant. These will be scheduled prior to July 1, 2012, when use of such a tool by certified treatment providers will become mandatory under state law.

The SARATSO Committee wishes to express its appreciation and thanks to the Speaker, John Pérez, and the Assembly Rules Committee, for making this important work possible.

Sincerely,

Janet Neeley  
Deputy Attorney General  
Member, SARATSO Review Committee